



News Release

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Childhood vaccine program in Washington to undergo major changes *Some children will no longer qualify for state-supplied vaccine*

OLYMPIA — Washington's program that uses state and federal funds to buy vaccine for all children in the state is changing. Starting July 1, human papillomavirus vaccine will no longer be bought with state money. Next May, state funds will no longer be used to buy any childhood vaccine — allowing time to plan a smooth transition so there are no breaks in vaccinating kids.

The state will continue using federal funding to buy vaccines for low income children. Health care providers can use this publicly-purchased vaccine to immunize children under age 19 who are enrolled in the state Medicaid program, have no insurance, are underinsured, or are Native American or Alaska Native. Children enrolled in free or low-cost state health plans, including the State Children's Health Insurance Program and Basic Health, will also continue to receive publicly-purchased vaccine.

"Vaccinating children is one of the best things parents can do to keep their children healthy," said Secretary of Health Mary Selecky. "The key to disease prevention is to make sure children have continued access to vaccine – that's our goal as we work through this change with our partners."

The changes mean kids with private health insurance won't get state-funded vaccine anymore. So, parents are encouraged to check their insurance policies to see which childhood vaccines are covered. Parents should present their insurance card every time their children are vaccinated.

"People don't always know if their health insurance covers vaccination," said Selecky. "Most insurance policies cover the costs of vaccines. Parents should check their coverage to be sure, and remember to take their insurance cards when their children get shots so health care providers can determine which vaccines are covered."

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Private health care providers play a crucial role in immunizing kids. They give more than 90 percent of all childhood immunizations. With these changes, providers will have to buy vaccine for their privately-insured patients, screen children to see if they're eligible for state-supplied vaccine, and keep separate inventories and records for privately and publicly-purchased vaccines.

Despite funding challenges childhood immunizations remain a public health priority. The budget crisis makes it necessary to change the way vaccines are purchased in our state. Recent outbreaks of measles and chickenpox in our state shows more must be done to protect our children and communities. Partnerships between state and local health and the health care community are more important than ever.

[Details on child vaccine changes](http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/immunize/providers/universal.htm) (www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/immunize/providers/universal.htm) are available online. To contact the Department of Health Immunization Program CHILD Profile with questions, call 1-866-397-0337 or e-mail universalchanges@doh.wa.gov.

For help finding a health care provider or an immunization clinic, call your [local health agency](#) (www.doh.wa.gov/LHJMap/LHJMap.htm) or the [WithinReach](http://www.withinreachwa.org) (www.withinreachwa.org) Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588.

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